

Odd Object Training – All Articles

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Disclaimer – exercise always carries a risk of injury, and it is the responsibility of the participant – not the author's – to insure that proper precautions are taken at all times. Safety and common safety are top priority.

Introduction - Odd object training involves exercise using heavy 'found objects' or implements. Many odd objects have been traditionally used in strongman training.

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Odd Object Training for Strength

Odd object training – generally - involves exercise using heavy 'found objects' or implements that you can modify for strength training. Many odd objects such as Atlas stones have been traditionally used as part of strongman training. This type of exercise is nothing new, but it has been coming back into favor recently. An odd object is a non-rigid implement with a center of mass that is not fixed. In conventional strength training, the pattern of movement is fixed, whereas the load given by odd objects will cause adjustments during the movement. Some label this style of training 'real world training', and odd objects certainly have benefits, including versatility, portability, and simplicity. The only limit is your own creativity, as well!

Odd object training used to be done because there were no other options – people either had no access to special equipment, or it simply had not been invented yet. Many old school strongmen also became very well known for using rather heavy odd or awkward objects. Such objects include kegs, anvils, Atlas stones, medicine balls, and sandbags. In this modern era, with all of the scientifically designed equipment and training routines that we can get access to, we can still benefit from odd object training. An increasingly popular philosophy of training – Dinosaur Training – promotes returning to the exercises and training of strongmen.

I have personally found that working with odd objects and the exercises I have discovered for them have helped with coordination, wrist and forearm strength, and more. I ended up getting into this kind of training as a result of reading about the old school strongmen in the Convict Conditioning books written by Paul 'Coach' Wade, as well as reading about the ancient training methods of Okinawan karate in the book 'The Art of Hojo Undo: Power Training for Traditional Karate' by Michael Clarke. The book Overcoming Gravity – written by Steven Low - focuses on basic gymnastics progressions for building strength. Many old school strongmen were capable of great feats of not only strength, but skill and balance. Let's remember that it takes strength to hold many of the positions in gymnastics. As such, I recommend these books very highly. Like with odd object training, the types of training these books describe help a lot with neuromuscular strength and efficiency, musculoskeletal strength, coordination, and more.

On the next page, I recommend some odd objects and other implements that I prefer to use, as well as alternative methodologies. I realize that this is far from a comprehensive treatment on the subject. As such, I do list my primary references at the end of the document and highly recommend that you visit them for plenty more exercises and ideas on constructing your own routines. Also, check out my blog regarding odd object training for links to YouTube playlists about this kind of training and hojo undo -

<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

An Amazon store is also available, which recommends various implements and books -

<http://astore.amazon.com/oddobjecttraining-20>

Odd Object Training for Strength continuedEquipment List

Don't forget to check out the video playlists linked at the top of this blog, for tutorials - <http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Old car tires

Have a partner hold the tire so that you can practice body blows on it. Make sure to wear MMA or boxing gloves (or similar hand protection). You can also practice front kicks and roundhouse kicks. You can also modify a martial arts striking dummy or makiwara board by adding a car tire to it. 'The Art of Hojo Undo' illustrates a few ideas. Alternative idea – if you can acquire a used truck / tractor tire and a sledgehammer, there are many drills you can use.

Cinder blocks

Curls, presses, plank variations, wide squats, calf raises, lunges, shrugs, single arm rows, swings, farmer's walk, step-ups, and more! For squats, you can also practice assisted one leg squats – step 9 in the squat progression of Convict Conditioning. Instead of using a basketball or similar object, you will use the cinder block for support as you squat down and 'find' the block with your hand. For calf raises, you can practice them standing on the cinder block. You will stand with on the balls of the feet on the edge of the block and lower your heels slowly, with control. Make sure you have a sturdy chair or other piece of furniture, a training partner, or a wall nearby to maintain a safe level of balance. Check out the second Convict Conditioning book for the calf raise progression.

Where to find used tires and cinder blocks?

Many times, auto repair shops will have plenty of old tires lying around they are happy to get rid of. If you're looking for cinder blocks, try the Freecycle Network - <http://www.freecycle.org/> - or ask friends or local businesses. Abandoned buildings will often have old materials lying around, but investigating such buildings can involve legal and safety issues, so exercise discretion.

Rice Bucket

There are wrist strengthening exercises that you can work using a bucket full of rice. Such exercises are common in baseball and physical therapy.

Heavy Bag

Any boxing, MMA, or similar heavy bag, or a heavy bag of your own construction. You can use different materials to both make the bag and fill it to your desired weight. Keep in mind that if you want your own constructed bag to be useful for martial arts practice, that the contents of the bag are not so hard that they do not allow any 'give' or cushion when you strike it. A heavy bag can be suspended by rope or chains. I would recommend visiting a sporting goods store or asking a local boxing, karate or similar instructor for advice on how to hang up bags. The book 'The Art of Hojo Undo' has a section titled 'Other Tools and Methods', which lists small heavy bag.

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Odd Object Training for Strength continued

The use that the book lists is as follows -

'Swinging a bag or ball filled with cement and allowing it to land on various parts of the body, conditions the mind and body to the effects of impact.'

There are many exercises you can practice with heavy bags. These include, but are not limited to, slams, squats, and fireman's carry.

Rope Climbing and Towels for Hang Grip Work

These make great additions to any grip or pullup training. Rope climbing is common in military style workouts. Like many odd object training methods, rope climbing and towel hangs build strength in the hands, wrists, forearms, tendons, and ligaments. Overcoming Gravity, a book I recommended earlier, recommends the use of a towel in its one arm pullup training progression. Also, the second Convict Conditioning book has a progression for hang grip work that includes the use of towels. The two progressions supplement one another very well.

Sandbag training

Sandbags can normally be purchased at a hardware store for a few dollars each, and commonly weight 40 to 45 pounds – making them very cheap lifting implements! You can do almost any type of lift with them, and the fact that the sand shifts around forces you to stabilize the bags, giving you a harder workout. Sandbag training is very useful for firefighters and combat athletes, such as cage fighters and wrestlers. I have personally put sandbags into a duffel bag, which you can normally pick up for \$15 or so at an army surplus. I have written a full article on sandbag training, which is also included in this guide.

My approach to sandbag training is based on the information on the subject in Dinosaur Training. I highly recommend the book for brutally tough, and very effective, strength training!

http://www.brookskubik.com/dinosaur_training.html

For free ideas on how to construct your own sandbags for training, as well as the reasoning behind “odd object training”, check out the below article -

<http://www.dieselcrew.com/how-to-odd-object-training>

Some other ideas for strength training without special equipment

Car pushing, chopping wood, using monkey bars or rafters for pullups and various gymnastics exercises, using chairs or picnic tables for 'chair dips' and decline pushups.

The “Strongman (strength athlete)” entry on Wikipedia lists various “odd objects” and more in the “Events” section - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strongman_\(strength_athlete\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strongman_(strength_athlete))

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Odd Object Training for Strength continued

Hojo Undo / martial arts tools

This is hardly a comprehensive list of implements that martial artists use. I simply want to recommend a few that I personally use when I teach. If you want more ideas on the old school Hojo Undo methods, have a look at the below Wikipedia article on the subject -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hojo_undo

Now, I will list and shortly describe the Hojo Undo implements that I personally teach and work with. If you would like to view a YouTube playlist that demonstrates this style of training, visit the following blog and click on 'Hojo Undo Videos' -

<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Lifting Tools of Hojo Undo that I personally use.

Chi ishi – weighted levers or 'strength stones'. A 'chi ishi' is basically a wooden pole with a concrete weights attached.

Makiage kigu – wrist roller. Traditionally, a wooden handle is used, with a weight hanging from it via a length of rope. I personally purchased a modern wrist roller, but the use is the same.

Tan – it is like a modern barbell, and made from a wood post that has concrete weights on each end. I use a steel barbell for the exercises recommended in 'The Art of Hojo Undo.' It is also a good idea to train bojutsu (staff technique) movements with a barbell that is light enough for you to use.

Impact Tools of Hojo Undo that I personally use.

Jari Bako - A bowl or bucket filled with sand, smooth stones, marbles, or even rice or beans. It is used by striking your fingers into it, in order to condition your fingers and fingertips.

Makiwara - a padded striking post traditionally used in some karate styles. I have written up an article about training with the makiwara.

<http://goo.gl/XPOg58>

'Tapping sticks' – almost any piece of wood can be held and used to tap various parts of your body to build a familiarity with getting hit. The point is not to hit yourself as hard as possible, but to slowly build up a tolerance to light striking. I personally use a shinai – a bamboo practice sword used for kendo practice. This kind of tool can be safely used to strike yourself or your training partner moderately hard to the muscles of the legs, arms, and core, but proper cautions must be used.

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Odd Object Training for Strength continued

Alternatives - there are striking bags available for sale that can be filled with dried beans or shot, which can help condition your striking tools. Wall punch pads can also be made or purchased. You can also use thick phone books wrapped up with duct tape as an alternative to makiwara boards. Also, there are plenty of 'ude tanren', or methods of forearm conditioning. This generally consists of partner blocking drills that can be used to toughen up the arms as well as help with reflexes.

My Primary References for this Article

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur_Training

<http://www.dieselcrew.com/how-to-odd-object-training>

<http://goo.gl/IDS7tx>

Also be sure to check out these two pages to look at training equipment that you can order -

<http://atomicathletic.com/store/>

<http://astore.amazon.com/oddobjecttraining-20>

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Old Time Strongmen – Training and Resources

This article was originally posted on the author's Odd Object Training blog -
<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

The old time strongmen from the 1800s and early 1900s were known for many legendary feats of strength. Many of these feats have not been replicated since! They used many kinds of training that are not commonly known, much less used, in "modern" gyms. Odd object training (such as anvils, sledgehammers, sandbags), progressive calisthenics, and various types of strongman training are coming back into fashion, however. The old time strongmen tended to not let any part of the body slip behind in strength, either - they trained the neck, forearms, calves, every muscle of the body. The benefits of this kind of training include coordination and agility, "all over strength" - power from head to toe, achieving a well balanced physique and a healthy body, building up insane grip strength and bulletproof joints, and well - learning how to do some awesome strength feats!

Some of the types of training that strongmen took up included kettlebell work, sprinting and overall endurance training, the art of hand balancing and other gymnastics style training, lifting barrels, kegs, and sandbags; there were even mental training methods used. Compound lifts such as deadlifts, presses, snatches and other such "big movements", many of which are still used today, were also trained. The old time strongmen were indeed into many different types of training that would benefit them in some way. Of course, they also understood the importance of recovery and proper nutrition. They also understood that you don't necessarily have to go through super long, protracted workouts every single day to become insanely strong, or machines, or a gym. The most important things are to understand proper exercise techniques to work each part of the body, how to work at enough intensity to force the body to adapt, with enough frequency to produce lasting gains.

Of course, dedication to the training and a long term outlook are also among the most important factors. Never rush your training - milk each exercise for all the strength gains you can possibly get out of it before moving up in intensity or load. As you progress in your training, whatever type of training you are into, remember to plan ahead. The more advanced you become, the more important it is to adjust frequency (how often you train, or how often you perform particular workouts), volume, exercise selection, intensity, and other factors.

Here is a list of the many types of strength feats strongmen were known for, and fortunately the knowledge of training methods for these is still around. The below webpage links out to articles that describe these feats. YouTube videos, as well as books and DVDs are available through this page.

Feats of strength - <http://legendarystrength.com/feats-of-strength/>

See the next page for a quick list of useful resources on the old time strongmen and their style of training. (Books, videos, and more.)

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Old Time Strongmen – Training and Resources continued

Resource List

Useful PDF books on the art of hand balancing -

<http://goo.gl/HCndtC>

<http://goo.gl/tW3XJM>

<http://goo.gl/V8yGGE>

I own an official print edition of Hand-Balancing for Muscular Development by Bill Hinbern, and I highly recommend it -

<http://goo.gl/Wt4ibG>

Some other very useful links -

<http://jasonferruggia.com/arthur-saxon-on-conditioning/>

<http://www.sandowplus.co.uk/>

<http://www.oldtimestrongman.com/products>

<http://www.oldtimestrongman.com/strength-articles>

<http://legendarystrength.com/?s=strongman>

http://www.functionalhandstrength.com/grip_articles.html

<http://astore.amazon.com/oldtimestrongman-20>

Be sure to also check out the YouTube playlists I put together for odd object training and hand balancing. Simply point your web browser to my video blog's URL below, then click on “Full List of YouTube Playlists” near the top, where you will find links to these playlists and more -

<http://martialartsplaylist.blogspot.com>

Dinosaur Training - Lost Secrets of Strength and Development:

<http://www.brookskubik.com/>

"MASTER THE TRAINING SECRETS OF THE STRONGEST MEN WHO EVER LIVED - AND BUILD MORE STRENGTH, POWER AND MUSCLE THAN EVER BEFORE!"

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Combining body weight training with odd object training

You don't need a gym membership to get in great shape! Learn a few body-weight only movement techniques, develop confidence in them, and apply some creativity in your training progression. Look around you and see what you can use in your environment. If you've spent time learning ways to make body weight training harder by adjusting different variables – leverage, hand position, range of motion, etc. – you can find endless ways to do so with little to no cost.

Playground equipment at a public park.

Hanging from a hand towel that is doubled over your pullup bar.

Arrange a pair of tables or chairs such that you can perform dips or pushups from them.

The movement skills you can learn this way can translate to better movement in your martial arts training as well! Progressive calisthenics focus on not just building strength in your muscles, but also strength in movement. The benefits to coordination, confidence, flexibility, mobility, and joint health also help with martial arts, but also with life in general.

The article below has some nifty ideas that combine this kind of training – progressive calisthenics – with “odd object training”. Check it out!

<http://progressivecalisthenics.com/odd-object-training-with-bodyweight/>

For my writeup on “odd object training”, see the post below -

<http://www.oddoobjecttraining.com/2013/02/free-pdf-book.html>

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Makeshift pullup bar setup – outside training area

My dad and I put up a pullup bar outside of one of the back windows at the studio. The bar can be used for hanging leg or knee raises, as well. This helps to complete a very “minimalist” outside training area! We already have a makiwara board hung up for striking practice. We already had cinder blocks for various lifts, as well as some old car tires for explosive training (throwing) and for striking with a sledgehammer. The tires can also be held by a partner for developing power in kicks and punches (just make sure you wear gloves). There are also a few bricks for use in pushup, handstand pushup, L-sit, and squat progressions. We can now get a tough, full body workout outside!

Oh, and the total cost of the project – \$0! We had the hooks, wood, foam, and duct tape already, and the pullup bar was a donation.

Pictures -

http://owenjohnstonkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140310_180119_572.jpg

http://owenjohnstonkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140310_180014_272.jpg

http://owenjohnstonkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140310_180014_2721.jpg

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Improvised makiwara (karate striking post)

Google Drive folder with pictures of this project -

Short URL: <http://goo.gl/8jpQ3M>

More about our “minimalist” training area with improvised gear – page 14

We have put together a sturdier wall-mounted makiwara (striking board) that is also more resistant to water damage. It's fairly simple and straightforward project. It's also very cost effective, as the materials can often be found at thrift shops and home improvement stores. The old car tire that we mounted the board onto was given to me freely by a local auto repair shop. The tire provides a bit more “give”, allowing the user to deliver powerful blows without risk of injury to joints (as long as proper technique and caution are used). Auto repair shops will usually give you old car tires for free if you ask nicely, since they will often be throwing out old tires on a regular basis.

There are various types of makiwara that have historically been used in various karate styles. Makiwara are Okinawan in origin and traditionally consisted of a wooden board or pole padded with rice straw tied on with rope. Foam is an excellent alternative form of padding. Duct tape, leather, and canvas work quite well as coverings, and are quite durable. The makiwara can be free standing (via a pole placed in the ground or somehow attached to something heavy) or mounted to a wall in some way. The primary purposes of the makiwara are to condition one's striking tools and “kime”, which in the context of karate, means focus of technique.

If you use canvas, make sure you have enough to fold around the foam and around to the back of the board a few inches so that it can be stapled on.

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Improvised makiwara (karate striking post), page 2

Our materials and tools:

3 feet of plyboard cut into two pieces with power saw

Pieces of foam from old flotation devices, trimmed down to fit the board (to provide cushion)

Elmer's Glue and Shoe Goo to keep the foam in place and protect the board from water damage; Shoe Goo is sturdy enough to take a lot of beating

Heavy weights to help flatten out the foam

Painting canvas wrapped around the wood and attached via staples to provide a striking surface

Old car tire to mount the finished board on via bolts or screws

Wall to mount the tire on, using old wiring and screws

We used quarter inch by two and a half inch bolts, washers, and locknuts to mount the board onto the tire. The locknuts won't work loose from vibration. The bolts go through the plywood and the tire. Then, you tighten the bolts to each other, with a locknut on either side of each bolt.

Makiwara is one of many tools used in "hojo undo", Japanese for "supplementary exercises". The term refers to training methods commonly used in traditional Okinawan karate. For a list of other tools, view my blog post:

<http://johnstonkarateclasses.com/2014/03/19/all-about-hojo-undo/>

I offer karate classes as well as many supplementary exercises. If you are interested, please get in touch – owen@johnstonkarate.com

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Makiwara Board – car tire project

We added a second modification to a makiwara board. Old car tire – 14 and 3/4 inches. We had a few lengths of old cable wire from when Time Warner Cable replaced the cable that went from our light pole to house, because of the recent icy weather. We used a good bit of wire to cinch up the makiwara to the tire. A final bit of wire was used for a hanger. We used a pair of rat nose pliers to twist the wire, and a wire cutter. The previous modification we made was gluing on a layer of dense foam on the back as a cushion.

Located at +Johnston Karate

<https://plus.google.com/117769930869918189235>

For more about this kind of training, visit -

<http://www.oddoobjecttraining.com/2013/02/our-training-equipment-pictures.html>

Pictures of the process we used in setting up the makiwara board -

http://understandingkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140221_173159_453.jpg?w=640&h=360

http://understandingkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140221_174554_430.jpg?w=640&h=1137

http://understandingkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140221_175025_475.jpg?w=640&h=1137

http://understandingkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140221_175640_182.jpg?w=640&h=1137

http://understandingkarate.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/img_20140221_175303_612.jpg?w=640&h=1137

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Our Odd Object Training Area

Originally posted on the below blog in December, 2014

<http://owenjohnstonkarate.com>

Short URL to the video – goo.gl/J3XUYY

My outside karate / strength training area with improvised equipment is basically complete. It is located behind my father's art studio and is very "minimalist". There isn't very much equipment, but who needs a lot when you can use creativity, found objects, and your own body weight? The only other pieces of equipment I would like in this area are a fully improvised uneven bars setup, a tractor tire (for flipping over), and a sledgehammer (for hitting tires with). Any other ideas are welcome and appreciated!

Minimalist training area so far:

Various "odd objects" including cinder blocks, bricks, and old car tires

A pullup bar set up in a window

Wall mounted car tire makiwara board – read my post about this project:

<http://understandingkarate.com/2014/12/19/improvised-makiwara/>

Broomstick and old metal folding chairs that can be used with a pair of cinder blocks for a makeshift horizontal pullup bar (these are stored inside)

A few "hojo undo" style tools (also stored inside)

Total cost:

\$0

I found the old cinder blocks and bricks scattered around the area. The car tires were given to me by auto repair shops. The pullup bar was donated to me, but one can be made from PVC pipe fairly easily. We had the other materials on hand already. My father's many dumpster diving adventures at a local thrift shop yielded quite a lot of stuff that's proven to be quite useful with just a bit of fixing!

The bricks can be used for some intense calisthenics and "hojo undo" style exercises. There a number of lifts you can do with cinder blocks and sandbags, which are "awkward" to move around compared to "conventional" weights. The car tires can be held by a partner so that you can practice strikes and kicks. (Granted, you'll want to wear some hand protection.) There's a ton of other exercises that you can do with tires, as well.

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Improvised martial arts striking bag

Pictured below is an improvised martial arts striking bag.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/oB_A2VSW5g-eYot6VXpfbzFqRHc/preview

The bag came from an army surplus, and I filled it with sand. It provides incredible resistance for strikes, but still has some “give” to it, which means you won’t break a bone when using proper, controlled technique. For more information on improvised gear, check out my blog below -

<http://www.oddobjecttraining.com/>

Army surplus duffel bag – \$15

Sand, 200lbs – \$20

The looks I’ll get when punching it – priceless

Protips:

Make sure you properly and gradually train your muscles and joints for rigorous work on any striking bag. Of equal importance is learning proper technique under a qualified instructor. This way, you will know how to safely strike the bag with correct form, and without injury.

Thirdly, protect your hands (MMA or karate gloves are suitable) until you have built up your power in striking the bag with proper technique. After that you may continue wearing hand protection if you wish, or strike the bag without it if you want to toughen up the hands.

Fourthly, if you want to toughen up your forearms and shins, strike the bag with your forearms (using blocking style techniques), and with round kicks. Of course, start slowly and gently at first with an eye on technique. It’s best to get the body used to the feeling of impact before going “all out”.

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Improvised martial arts striking bag, page 2

Lastly, always wrap up your session with some stretches, mobility work, and therapy for all of the muscles and joints that you trained. Therapy includes massage, heat, ice, post training muscle rub (something like “Icy Hot” TM), and so forth.

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Sandbag training for functional, real world strength

Sandbag training is incredible for building functional, real world strength. It is also relatively inexpensive. Sandbags commonly cost no more than \$6 each at hardware stores. An army duffel bag can usually be found at army surpluses for \$15-20 on average. I love training with these because you can do almost any type of lift with them, and the fact that the sand shifts around forces you to stabilize the bags, giving you a harder workout. Sandbag training is very useful for firefighters and combat athletes, such as cage fighters and wrestlers.

Try tossing two sandbags into one and try a few lifts – fireman’s carry, clean and press, curls, squats, swings. Or, put one sandbag each in two sturdy backpacks and hold them anyway you like while walking. I recommend holding one in each hand and building up to walking a quarter mile with them. It works the legs, back, and especially the arms. Eventually try bear hugging a duffel bag with two sandbags in it while walking. Build up to 3, 4, or even 5 sandbags in your duffel.

For more ideas, read “Dinosaur Training” by Brooks Kubik, as well as articles on awkward object lifting (which I will link below). Below are two of my favorite online articles on the subject. The first one concisely details the benefits of such training, various odd objects, where to get them, and how to use them. The second article talks about developing “real world strength” through this style of training. My own article on the subject is included later in this book.

<http://goo.gl/tQJii4>

<http://zacheven-esh.com/real-world-strength/>

I have put together my own blog dedicated to odd object training, so please check it out for videos and articles, if you want to know more - <http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

Dinosaur Training is essentially a philosophy of "weight training / physical culture promoting a return to traditional strongman types of exercises and training..." Visit the Wikipedia entry for full information -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinosaur_Training

Or, feel free to visit the author’s website at -

<http://www.brookskubik.com/>

If you are experienced in progressive calisthenics or gymnastics, try wearing a sandbag while performing chin ups, dips, and other exercises. This is one of many methods that can help you progress towards much harder movements such as one arm chinups. There are plenty of other great ideas on using odd objects in conjunction with progressive calisthenics over at this article -

<http://goo.gl/qnYto4>

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Sandbag training for functional, real world strength, page 2

The blog that the article is hosted on is the official blog of the Progressive Calisthenics Certification community. The certification workshops are organized by Dragon Door, an industry leader in fitness certifications. The certification was developed by Paul “Coach” Wade (author of Convict Conditioning), the Kavadlo brothers (both well known personal trainers, amazing body weight athletes, and authors), and more. If you want to know more about the workshops, or even sign up to attend one, visit below -

http://www.dragondoor.com/workshops/?F_c=35

If you would like to get a headstart on progressive calisthenics, read the full article on the subject that is included in this guide. It also includes recommended books, some YouTube playlists, and more. Lastly, I provide sandbag training as one of my class offerings. If you would like to know more, or contact me for a free consultation, visit my class page -

<http://johnstonkarateclasses.com/>

Caveman Conditioning: Uncivilized, Minimalist Training Methods

Caveman conditioning revolves around rather uncivilized and minimalist, but very rewarding, strength training methods out in nature, whether it be the woods, the mountains, wherever. Why bother with a gym or expensive equipment when you can get your strength training for little to no money? Even if the closest thing to nature you have available to you is a public park, you can still get a free but difficult workout by trying some of the ideas from “caveman conditioning”! No matter where you go, you just need some creativity and knowledge of proper exercise technique.

Please note – this article is not related in any way to the “Caveman Conditioning” of Bodyforce. This is my own take on “primitive” training methods, and no copyright infringement is intended in any way. Check out Bodyforce’s awesome Caveman Conditioning page by visiting the blog below and clicking on “Caveman Conditioning” - <http://stuardorrill.wordpress.com/>

Precautions

Dress for safety and for the weather. Always have permission to use the land. (Unless you, a close friend, or a family member owns it – in which case, knock yourself out. If you get yourself in trouble though, “I told you so.”) Take all proper precautions before you go into the woods, including hydration, sunblock, any needed equipment, hiking shoes, thick socks, and bug repellent spray. Read this article on Lyme disease, which can be contracted from ticks (often picked up in the woods during warmer months) - <http://goo.gl/WtO6iK>

Caveman Conditioning – Strength Training Methods

Drag away dead trees by hand. Chop down a tree for firewood. Shovel some dirt. You’d be surprised how great these are for training both strength AND endurance, until you’ve done one of them steadily for an hour. Especially in hot weather.

You can use a relatively low but very sturdy tree branch for pullups, leg raises, various gymnastics exercises, and so forth. You could also perform a burpee, jump up to the branch explosively, do a pullup, drop, and repeat, for a full set.

Run through and navigate the natural obstacle course that the woods provide – this includes jumping ditches. Climb trees for grip work and overall agility. Hang a rope from a tree and learn some rope climbing exercises to train your grip and overall body strength even more. Ropes are also useful in pullup variations and mud run style obstacles. Look into army training and drills for ideas. Look online for the Army Field Manual 21-20 and read it thoroughly.

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Clear any straw and or leaves in a particularly shady and grassy area that could be used for various calisthenics – just remember to wear long shirts and pants for this. Also make sure that if you're going to use the area and regularly, spray it for ticks using Permethrin or another recommended pesticide. Anyway, some excellent calisthenics in such an area include using a tree for support when practicing gymnastics backbends or various handstand exercises. You could also wrap a length of heavy rope around a tree to use for striking practice. Just make sure you get instruction from a qualified martial arts instructor before trying this and wear hand protection, such as wrist wraps. I recommend using rice bucket exercises to strengthen your wrists, and using other such exercises to toughen the hands. Here is a writeup I did on this topic - <http://goo.gl/NUcLAI>

Picture of a “tree makiwara” - <http://goo.gl/L8Dz7m>

For plenty of great calisthenics tutorials, including some on exercises listed in this post, head over to my body weight training playlist page. Simply point your web browser to the blog below and click on “Body Weight Training” near the top.
<http://martialartsplaylist.blogspot.com>

Sprint through an abandoned field – but make absolutely sure you clear a straight path of anything that you could trip over or that could pierce shoes or skin, as well as wear sweatpants and running shoes with excellent heel support. If the woods are in a particularly hilly area, you can go for hill sprints, which are great for explosiveness!

Repurpose materials from abandoned properties out in the woods. This includes using cinder blocks for biceps curls and other lifts. You could also use any old beams, chairs, heavy duty rope, and bricks that are available. Old beams or planks of wood could be laid across a ditch, or used as a calf raise step (put it next to a tree or wall that you can use to assist in balance). Bricks can be used in some hand balancing exercises, and as support in one leg squats. Old chairs can be used for an incredible variety of calisthenics. These include decline pushups, chair dips, gymnastics L-sits, uneven or “lever” pushups (as they are called in the first Convict Conditioning book, but using a chair instead of a basketball), and so forth. You could push your car down a path through the woods, along a mountain path that is not highly trafficked, and so forth. It is amazing for both cardio and giving you a whole body workout! Check out the below video for some ideas.

<http://goo.gl/5rYbJY>

Did you like these “Caveman Conditioning” strength training ideas? Do you have any of your own that you want to share or brag about? Drop me a line in the comments on this article's blog post - <http://goo.gl/lqNeE4>

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View the article All About Progressive Calisthenics for much more about body weight training, including articles and videos - <http://goo.gl/npO6Jp>

Great blog post on the official Progressive Calisthenics certification blog, about a similar approach to “hybrid” training methods - <http://goo.gl/qnYto4>

For more ideas on improvised training equipment, and plenty of tutorial videos, head to my related blog - <http://www.oddobjecttraining.com>

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All about Hojo Undo -
Supplementary training exercises for karate

"Hojo Undo", or "supplementary exercises", is a Japanese term that refers to training methods commonly used in traditional Okinawan karate. The exercises were designed to be very specific to karate training and helped develop breathing, posture, coordination, functional ambidextrous strength, and conditioning. The tools have traditionally been simple and improvised with some creativity and materials that are affordable or readily found for free - mostly wood, rope, straw, and stone.

The tools include, but are not limited to:

"Chi ishi" - weighted levers; aka "strength stones"

"Makiage kigu" - wrist rollers, normally a weight hung from a wooden handle via rope, and used to develop the wrists and forearms.

"Makiwara" - Padded striking post. Traditionally, rope is used to bind a pad of rice straw to the top to create a striking surface. (Maki = roll; Wara = straw.) Other materials such as duct tape are suitable, however. Other traditional types of makiwara include age-makiwara (hanging), ude-makiwara (round on all sides), tou-makiwara (bamboo stalks or cane). The smaller and more commonly seen makiwara boards are usually made of a pad that is covered with canvas and fixed to a board, then mounted to a wall. There are some variations, such as clapper and portable makiwara.

For a longer list of the tools, visit the Hojo Undo entry on Wikipedia -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hojo_undo

All of my other writeups about Hojo Undo may be found by visiting my classes page and clicking the link titled "Hojo Undo" at the top -

<http://johnstonkarateclasses.com>

Or visiting this short URL - <http://goo.gl/GwTbps>

OddObjectTraining.com

Other Resources

<http://owenjohnstonkarate.com>

For plenty of credible health information -

<http://www.webmd.com>

For plenty of training videos and tutorials, head over to my YouTube playlist blog -

<http://martialartsplaylist.blogspot.com>

Don't forget to check out the two lists of resources that I maintain -

<http://understandingkarate.com/2013/02/21/understanding-karate-do-supplementary-resources/>

<http://understandingkarate.com/2014/03/21/training-resource-posts/>

<http://freekaratedownloads.blogspot.com/>

<https://plus.google.com/communities/114731250565870013102>

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